

Preliminary Amendment

Application No.: National Stage of PCT/IT2004/000018

Attorney Docket No. Q95708

**Please insert the Abstract of the Disclosure found in clean form on the attached
unnumbered sheet:**

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ABSTRACT

The process for reducing the level of harmful substances in tobacco leaves comprises the following steps: steeping the leaves in a water bath at a temperature of between 13°C and 25°C for between 4 and 12 hours, cooling the leaves to a temperature not higher than -35°C; and gradually heating the leaves at an average rate of not more than 2.0°C/h up to a temperature of at least 35°C.